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NATIVE AFRICAN RACES AND CULTURE

BY

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God's Trombones---Seven Negro Sermons in Verse
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

We are glad to add to the Occasional Papers published by the Trustees of the John F. Slater Fund this brief treatment of a large and difficult subject. It seems to me that Dr. Johnson has handled the matter not only clearly and concisely but very interestingly.

In spite of the increasing number of publications the general ignorance of most of us in America in regard to Africa is as dense and dark as the great Continent was once supposed to be. I know how great was my ignorance of the history and present conditions of the Negro Peoples of Africa until a visit and consequent readings brought me some knowledge and many surprises. This publication is issued in the hope that it will help to increase or correct our knowledge and widen our view of a story which may be said to branch over to America.

J. H. Dillard.

July, 1927.

236

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Native African Races and Culture

By James Weldon Johnson

The African continent, with its eleven million square miles, almost four times as large as the United States of America, has a history reaching to the very dawn of human consciousness and of written or carven record. It has been not only a cradle of races and nations, but of refining arts, technology and crafts as well. Vast folk migrations have passed through the African continent from one end to the other; with the consequence that it now holds in its population of well above two hundred millions, the most diverse races, nations and languages imaginable.

For Americans, Africa and more particularly African Negroes have derived their chief significance from slavery. To speak of the Negro was to refer to a man of color, usually thought of as "black", brought on a slave ship to America, without possessions, without culture or aptitude, who had to learn laboriously the language of the country to which he had been brought, as well as the simplest tasks imposed upon him. The descendants of the slave labored under the disabilities which had been imposed upon him. They were at first denied the possession of human souls. They were thought of as being nearer to the beast than to man. All their achievements, whether they attained to the rank of artisan or eventually began to take their place in industry, science and the arts, were attributed to their new environment. They were held to be the beneficiaries of their new home. They had brought nothing with them. What they became, what they are, is attributed entirely to the beneficence of their home in the Western Hemisphere.

To adopt this point of view, as it has been generally adopted in the United States, is to ignore the African background of the Negro. That background is both an ancient and a richly varied one. To that background it is the purpose in the following pages to give brief consideration.

African Races

To begin with, there is no single and uniform Negro type or race. The most careful and scientific writers on the subject of African races have found it virtually impossible to give any definition of what constitutes a Negro since not only in stature, in physical conformation, but in skin color as well there is infinite variation among the African peoples. Thus, as Du Bois says, "the mulatto . . . is as typically African as the black man", and Sir Harry Johnston attributes to African races an admixture of Caucasian blood varying from one-half to one-thirty-second. While his generalizations are not meant to be taken as exact or literal, it may be worth while to give here his estimates of the proportion of "white" or "Caucasian" blood in native African peoples:

Race	Proportion of Caucasian blood
Hima	½
Masai-Latuka	¼ to ⅛
Suk-Turkana-Elgumi	⅛
Nilotic	1/24
Bantu	1/16 to 1/32
West African	None
Pygmy	"
Bushman (Hottentot)	"

This same author divides the native Negro inhabitants of the African continent into three main groups: first, "the Negro in general", ranging from Abyssinia on the East Coast to Senegal and from Lake Chad to Cape Colony in the South; second, the Congo Pygmy; and third, the Hottentot Bushman, living in the southern triangle of the Continent. In the northern two-thirds of the African Continent are more than one hundred "separate and independent language families" each group of languages being "so separate from the other and without outside affinities that any one of them might be Asiatic or American so far as special African affinities were concerned." In the southern one-third of the African Continent, on the other hand, there is but one language-family, the Bantu; its only rival being the Bushman-Hottentot tongues which, together with the Sandawi in East Africa,

are spoken by, at most, 50,000 people as against the 40,000,000 who at the time Sir Harry Johnston wrote spoke the Bantu tongues.

The descriptions of these races, even to one who has not seen individuals or pictures of individuals, will give some idea of the diversity which prevails. Thus the pygmies, whose existence was at first doubted, and who were believed to be the invention of explorers with a taste for tall stories about short people, are a tiny race, often less than five feet tall, inhabiting the Congo forests of Central Africa, living chiefly by hunting and trapping. Their color is variously described as being coffee brown, red and light yellow. In those northern portions of Africa, bordering on the southern fringe of the Sahara desert, and extending across the continent at its widest, known as the Sudan, are a bewildering variety of races, of all colors and forms. The Fellatahs, Nigritians, Berbers and Arabs, all with different degrees of Negro admixture, vary in color from light brown, and almost white, to a dark brown. The Ewe speaking peoples in the western part of this area, on the coast and in the countries adjoining the coast, have a strong Moorish cast of feature, some of them with reddish hair. Dowd quotes Canot as saying of the Fellatah girls: "I do not think the forms of these Fellatah girls, with their complexions of freshest bronze, are excelled in symmetry by the women of any other country."

In what Dowd calls the northern and the southern cattle zones of Africa, where cattle keeping is the main occupation of the natives, are the Masai, whose "aristocratic class" averages about six feet in height, are "spare in figure and recall the 'Apollo type' ", whose young women "are especially pleasing in their physiognomy". On the plateau west of Lake Victoria, one of the Great Lakes of Africa, are the Bahima, "a tall, and finely formed race, of nutty-brown color, with almost European features. They have oval faces, thin lips and straight noses." In the southern part of the Continent are a group of races, including the Hottentot, Kaffir, Zulu, Basuto, Makololo, Herrero, Matabele, etc., whose colors and statures are as varied as those of other races of Africa. Thus, to traverse in a swift birds-eye glance the races of this ancient Continent, the Continent of mystery, is to range from the Pygmies of the Congo forests to the Turkana-Suk, one of the

tallest races living on the surface of the globe. The late Captain Wellby met with a district in which he estimated the average height of the men as being seven feet; and Sir Harry Johnston found very tall men, a number of them as tall as six feet six inches.

Origin of the African Races

While the culture of ancient Egypt, the land of pyramids and of the sphinx, of colossal statuary and enormous temples, is well known to Americans, it is not often called to mind that the Negro played an important part in Egyptian civilization, that Egyptian civilization not only radiated downward into Africa, but that the Negro furnished rulers, officers, artisans, as well as a substantial part of the population during Egypt's long history. The ancient chronicler, one of the first and greatest historians, Herodotus, as Du Bois points out, alluded to the Egyptians as "black and curly-haired." And measurements in the tombs of Egyptian nobles of the eighteenth dynasty indicate that Negroes then formed at least one-sixth of the higher class.

In the chief art museums of Europe, in the Egyptian collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, are beautifully carved heads and full statues of Egyptian rulers, many of them plainly bearing evidence, in Negro cast of features, of the part played by the Negro in Egypt's history. Is it not significant that the features of the great Sphinx are negroid?

Just where and how the race called Negro originated is in dispute and constitutes a question to which no completely satisfactory answer may be given. Johnston believes that the Pygmies are nearest the basic Negro race; that they were driven deeper and deeper into the recesses of the Congo forest by successive invasions from the North, the chief invaders being the group of races now known as Bantu; that there was a strong admixture from time to time of Hamitic peoples who crossed the Red Sea from Arabia or wandered down from Egypt. Dr. Alexander Francis Chamberlain, in the *Journal of Race Development,* 1911, indicates the part which Negroes played in ancient Egypt. He points out that Nefertari, Queen of Egypt, was a Negro woman of great beauty, who lived about 1700 B. C., was highly honored

and venerated, and had many monuments erected in her honor. This author states that "the Egyptian race itself in general had a considerable element of Negro blood, and one of the prime reasons why no civilization of the type of that of the Nile arose in other parts of the Continent, if such a thing were at all possible, was that Egypt acted as a sort of channel by which the genius of Negroland was drafted off into the service of Mediterranean and Asiatic culture. In this sense Egyptian civilization may be said, in some respects, to be of Negro origin." He points out further that Ethiopian women, "black but comely", as wives of satraps or governors of provinces, and kings, were often the real rulers of Oriental provinces and empires. Negro poets were known in Damascus and other Oriental cities. The presence of Egyptian types among the peoples further south in the continent is repeatedly commented upon by explorers and writers. Among the Bahima in the Uganda Protectorate have been noticed again and again "a type of face startingly Egyptian in its main features, and sometimes not much darker in complexion."

What part, if any, the early Phoenician traders and their Carthaginian descendants played in contributing to the formation of the African races remains a matter of conjecture. There is, however, no doubt whatever that Moors and Arabs, all the races inhabiting northern Africa, as well as many inhabiting the Near East, have not only absorbed Negro strains but have been absorbed during the invasions, folk-wanderings and commerce on the African Continent.

Political Organization

In the Sudan especially once existed great empires and kingdoms testifying to the organizing power of the Negro and of African races. These empires were not confined to the Sudan. There were powerful leaders and dynasties in the heart of Africa, and in South Africa as well. In the Uganda protectorate, for example, which centers in the great African Lakes at the headwaters of the Nile, Johnston estimates that the history of these kingdoms extends as far back as the 14th century of our era. This author re-tells the legend of what he calls the "Norman of Central Africa," a conqueror whom he thus compares with Wil-

liam the Conqueror who led the Normans to a conquest of the Anglo-Saxon population of England. His name, so legend tells, was Muganda or "the brother", and he came with a pack of dogs, a woman, a spear, and a shield to the Katonga Valley. He was a poor man but so successful in hunting that large numbers of the aboriginal Negroes flocked to him for flesh. They finally became so devoted to him as to invite him to become their chief. He accepted and soon "erected his principality into a strong and well-organized power." "The Kings of Uganda", says Johnston, "kept up their prestige, maintained their wealth, and asserted their influence over the aristocracy by the continual raids they made over the adjacent countries of Busoga, Bukedi, Unyoro, Toro and even Ruanda . . . The limit of their power to the west at times was only the wall of the Congo Forest. Mr. Lionel Decle, in his extended explorations of the country immediately north of Tanganyika, found in a village an ancient Uganda shield, supposed to have been there about a hundred years, and according to the traditions of the natives it was obtained from one of the warriors of a Uganda expedition who fell in battle against the people of Burindi. These powerful Negro kings maintained a certain civilization and a considerable amount of law and order in the territories which they governed."

The history of these kingdoms extends back for hundreds of years. They were not merely the sudden and evanescent creations of some chieftian, but were established empires with regular succession of rulers, a hierarchy of court officials and provincial governors, and all the ceremony incidental to such a political structure. "So far as tradition goes," says Sir Harry Johnston, "the Bahima of Ankole can trace the genealogy of their kings for about 300 years back. The Baganda can recall their kings of a period as far distant as the fifteenth century. The genealogy of the Uganda sovereigns includes thirty-six names (prior to the present king); and if the greater part of the earlier names are not myths, this genealogy, reckoning an average of fifteen years' reign to each monarch, would take us back to the middle of the fourteenth century . . . Assuming that they are to be reduced because they contain repetitions or imaginary or concurrent names, one is still entitled to assume that Uganda, Unyoro, and perhaps Ankole and Karagwe to the

south, have been settled kingdoms under dynasties of Hamitic (Gala?) origin for five hundred years." Dowd reports that at the time of Stanley's visit the empire of the Waganda covered an area of 70,000 square miles. "Up to the recent domination by the British", says Dowd, "the Waganda were governed by an emperor who had a well-organized government. His council included a prime minister, several princesses, a chief butler, chief baker, and a commander of the army and navy. There were feudal lords ruling over provinces and owing allegiance to the king." Stanley estimated the fighting force at 25,000 men and reported that on campaigns the army was accompanied by women and children who carried spears and other weapons, besides provisions and water.

In the southern triangle of the African Continent, especially on the eastern side, are remains of walled cities, which seem to indicate powerful empires that have passed from the memory of man.

But even in recent times the South African races have demonstrated their organizing power. Dowd tells of the Kaffir tribes: "Their military life and habit of manipulating men has developed a degree of constructive imagination far beyond that of any other races of Africa. Their strategy in war and diplomacy in politics would do credit to any race; and some of their military leaders have been not inaptly compared to Caesar. In 1852, when Sir George Cathcart invaded Basutoland, his army was led into a trap by the simple stratagem on the part of the native leader, Moshesh, of exposing an immense herd of cattle in a position on the Berea mountain where their capture appeared easy. The British army was surprised, defeated and forced to retreat."

It is, of course, in the regions just south of the Sahara, in the Sudan and adjacent territories, that the most elaborate political organization has lasted even to our day. Kingdoms in the Sudan existed for centuries, with mosques, archives and towns, having flourishing fairs attended by thousands of people. These fairs were thoroughly policed, good order being scrupulously maintained, with an elaborate procedure for trying such cases as arose out of disputes or breaches in good order. A. B. Ellis states that Oyo or Yoruba was a powerful kingdom at least as early as 1724. George W. Ellis says of these kingdoms in

northwestern Africa: "Some of the kings—possessing two capitals, and living in fortified castles that had glass windows and were decorated with sculptures and painting—had pageantries of the most stately magnificence. Indeed, when England, Germany, and France were just emerging from barbarism in intellectual, scientific, industrial and political development, some of these dynasties had attained a comparatively high degree of civilization; and geographers and historians mention Ghana, Timbuctu, and other interior towns as the resorts for the rich, the learned and the pious of all countries."

A description of the magnificent ceremonies incidental to a reception held by the king of Ashanti was noted in 1817 by Mr. Bowditch of the Royal African Company, and reprinted by A. B. Ellis: "Our observations en passant," wrote Mr. Bowditch, "had taught us to conceive a spectacle far exceeding our original expectations; but they had not prepared us for the extent and display of the scene which here burst upon us: an area of nearly a mile in circumference was crowded with magnificence and novelty. The king, his tributaries, and captains, were resplendent in the distance, surrounded by attendants of every description, fronted by a mass of warriors which seemed to make our approach impervious. The sun was reflected, with a glare scarcely more supportable than the heat, from the massive gold ornaments which glistened in every direction. More than a hundred bands burst at once on our arrival, with the peculiar airs of their several chiefs; the horns flourished their defiances, with the beating of innumerable drums and metal instruments, and then yielded for a while to the soft breathings of their long flutes, which were truly harmonious; and a pleasing instrument, like a bagpipe without the drone, was happily blended. At least a hundred large umbrellas, or canopies, which could shelter thirty persons, were sprung up and down by the bearers with brilliant effect, being made of scarlet, yellow and the most showy cloths and silks, and crowned on the top with crescents, pelicans, elephants, barrels, and arms and swords of gold; they were of various shapes, but mostly dome . . . . . The king's messengers, with gold breast-plates, made way for us, and we commenced our round, preceded by the canes and the English flag." Mr. Bowditch estimated the number of warriors

present at this memorable scene at not less than 30,000. Ellis reports that Ashanti has been known to Europeans as a kingdom since the middle of the seventeenth century; "and their military superiority, which has secured the capital from destruction by other tribes, has enabled them to preserve the remains, and with them the memories, of former rulers."

Two forces in Africa, especially contributed to the formation and the maintenance of the powerful native kingdoms. One was the walled and fortified city with its regular social, religious and family institutions. The other was the market, which is one of the unique developments of the African Continent. Chamberlain says of the latter: "The institution of the market and the fair, e. g., among the Negro peoples of the Sudan and the development out of it of the village, the town and the city, are one of the most interesting phenomena in all the history of human culture. Among the questions involved in the evolution of the market and the fair are: the greater share of women in public and semi-public activities; the breaking down of the narrowness of mere tribal boundaries and clan-instincts, consequent upon the gathering together of so many people at repeated intervals; the movement toward abolition of war through the institutions of the marketplace and the prohibition of all hostile acts during the time of fairs and markets, etc.; the amalgamation of peoples resulting from the ultimately permanent character of these markets and fairs, and the absorption of those conducting them more or less into the general population by the consolidation of the temporary city without the walls with the old city within them; the influence upon the general honesty and morality of the community of the increasing importance of the right of asylum, the protection of the stranger within and without the gates, the necessity of honest weights and measures; the autonomy of the market, the market-tax with its corollary of protection of free-trade; the market-holiday and its relation to religious and other festivals and ceremonial occasions, etc."

It will be seen that in the case of African Negroes as indeed with all other races, political institutions beginning in such apparently simple needs as the desire to exchange commodities in markets have permeated every phase of life, leading to the de-

velopment of cities, of kingdoms and empires and ceremonial life on a large scale.

The simplest village life of some of the African tribes has developed forms of common action which might well be emulated by more "civilized" and complex communities. Land is often held in common, being regarded as much a necessity of existence as water or air. And problems of land ownership are thus disposed of in a way to support all the population without either extreme wealth on the one hand or the contrast of terrible poverty on the other. Even in those tribes where slavery has been practiced it has taken a form less destructive than it took among white peoples. African slaves were for the most part regarded as members of the family and often amassed wealth surpassing that of their owners.

The law-abiding nature of the native African has often been commented upon by travellers and explorers. "The fondness of the African tribes for settling their disputes by recourse to courts is well known," says Herskovits. "Penalties for theft, murder, adultery, and other offenses are apparently fixed and understood by these courts; and, in general, the parties to a dispute abide by the decision of the court, even where the machinery of enforcement seems to be lacking." Of the treatment of slaves Dowd says: "Waitz was right in his contention that, as a rule, slaves are better treated among savages than among civilized people, for the reason first, that the savage master does not place so much value upon time and labor and hence does not rush his slaves, and second, that savage masters do not draw such tight class distinctions."

The extent of native African villages may be gathered when it is borne in mind that in a single town of the Latuka tribe, for example, there might be as many as 10,000 to 12,000 head of cattle. One tribe in the Sahara, the Tibbus, observed Denham, had 5,000 camels.

Among the Hausas, "legislation was in the hands of the governor of the state or city acting in conjunction with a council of rich men or nobles. Among the Yorubas it was in the hands of the king and local governor or councils, but sometimes the whole people assembled and made and administered the laws. In each state there was a council of chiefs and elders, and a

two-thirds vote was required for the enactment of a law." The Hausas, among other tribes, had a clearly developed code of law and police maintained order at their markets. In this connection it should be borne in mind that the institution of police, paid out of public moneys, is a very late development in the history of European cities, wealthy people in England and on the Continent taking their retainers and servants with them for protection against robbers when going out after dark.

The decay of these states and governments and the stagnation of culture and civilization may be traced directly to the African slave trade. Slave trading threw the greater part of the Continent into chaos and in the four hundred years during which it existed cost Africa, it is estimated, one hundred million souls.

Religion

Religion takes a prominent place, perhaps the most prominent place, in the lives of most primitive peoples. It is of course often intimately involved in the practice of witchcraft. Among the African tribes as among the ancient Greeks, legends of gods were made to account for natural forces, Shango being the God of Thunder among the tribes of the West Coast and innumerable deities taking the place of the gods and nymphs and demons of Greek mythology. A. B. Ellis says that "the general bias of the Negro mind has been in favor of selecting the firmament for the chief Nature-god, instead of the Sun, Moon or Earth; and in this respect the natives resemble the Aryan Hindus, Greeks, and Romans, with whom Dyaus pitar, Zeus, and Jupiter equally represented the firmament."

All natural activities are of course attributed to personal forces. Deaths are supposed to have been caused by malevolence and sorcery; and Ellis points out that among the Yoruba on the Slave Coast of West Africa old women, like those in England when witchcraft was an article of faith, often acknowledged themselves witches when accused and charged themselves with deaths which had occurred in the community.

The rhythmic sense for which many of the African peoples are noted finds its expression in their religious dances. We quote again from Ellis's important work, The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples

of the Slave Coast of West Africa: "Dancing was, with the Greeks, intimately connected with worship; as Lucian says, 'You cannot find a single ancient mystery in which there is not dancing;' and on the Gold and Slave Coasts every god of note has his own dance, which is sacred to him, and known only to the intiated. The religion of ancient Greece has been obscured by a great deal of later poetic imagery; but, when we look into it closely, it is found to be similar to that of the Yorubas, and was no doubt produced when the Greeks were in a like intellectual condition."

Among the tribes inhabiting the Sudan and North Africa, many are adherents of Islam. The Vai, for example, are Moslems for they have been taught that the Negro has played an honorable part in the military history and achievements of that religion. "By the best informed Muhammadans," says George W. Ellis, "the Africans are made to feel a pride in the fact that their race is recognized in the Koran, which contains a chapter inscribed to a Negro, and the Muhammad was in part descended from an African and had a Negro as his confidant in Arabia. It is pointed out that Negroes figured prominently in the progress of Islam, and on one occasion slew a rival of Muhammad. It is said that the prophet greatly admired a Negro poet of ante-Islamic times and regretted that he had never seen him. The Vai Negroes thus feel a close relationship to the Koranic faith. As we have seen, they name their children after Muhammad and the prophets as if they were their kinsmen. They delight to think of and commune with the great masters of their faith as equals. Their boys may be seen writing in the sand these names and the words of the Koran."

The spread of the Islamic faith throughout Africa has, of course, been hastened by the Arab traders, who for centuries have not only been plying the coasts of the African Continent but have been penetrating its deserts and jungles in search of gold, ivory, rare stones and woods and other products, as well as slaves.

The function of the medicine man and the priest in African tribal life is so varied and far-reaching that only a few aspects of it can be even touched upon here. But it should be borne in mind, first of all, that his practices are in no wise limited merely to superstitious gestures, dances, amulets, etc. In fact, some of

the outstanding medical discoveries of Europe had been made in a prior form by the medicine men of Africa: for example, that flies and mosquitoes are the purveyors of disease. This discovery had been made among the Yoruba, whose medical men attributed smallpox to a most powerful and evil spirit, Shankpanna, whose agents and messengers are flies and mosquitoes. In other parts of Africa the medicine men have learned how to set bones, puncture the lung in cases of pleurisy, and administer a multitude of remedies as well as poisons concocted from shrubs, flowers and trees known to them only.

Dowd points out that the medicine men "do not always resort to magic or rely upon spirits and deities, but have a considerable knowledge of materia medica, and treat diseases on purely scientific principles; that is to say, they examine the patient, locate the seat of the disease and prescribe certain diet and medicines."

On the West Coast, the religion of the natives has been brought to the point of a well-established and thoroughly organized priesthood, which is in reality a guild or fraternity, requiring special training and apprenticeship as well as special initiation. Among the Yoruba there are three orders of priests, with well recognized grades. Knowledge of the mysteries of the gods is transmitted from generation to generation and the numbers of priests were augmented from time to time either by people devoting themselves or being devoted by relatives or masters to this life-profession. Among the Tshi-speaking people of the West Coast a novitiate of as long as three years was required, the novices living in retirement and receiving instruction from priests in the secrets of the craft. Dancing formed a special part of their education and they had to undergo many months of instruction and practice before being allowed to appear in public. The dance was performed to the sound of drums, and it was during the dance that the priest became inspired, or "possessed", by a god and let fall oracular utterances. These utterances, says A. B. Ellis, differ in no essential particular from the replies given by the oracle of Delphi in Greece to suppliants for divine guidance.

The beliefs of African tribes are of course exceedingly various. "The striking resemblance which the Yoruba religious

system bears to that of the ancient Greeks can scarcely have escaped notice," says Ellis. "The spirits of the trees answer to the Hama-dryads, and we have river-gods and sea-spirits and metamorphosis to a brook, spring, or lagoon is common, and we have one example of a girl being transformed, like Daphne, into a shrub."

Among the Tshi-speaking peoples the word *kra* is used to designate the spirit of a living man, or the spirit which dwells in him and to which sacrifice is made in return for the protection it affords. A similar spirit is supposed to inhere in inanimate objects. The word *kra* does not correspond to the European idea of soul, but is rather a guardian spirit, who leaves a man after his death. Dreams are supposed to represent the adventures of the *kra* or guardian spirit during sleep.

The part played by the fetish in West African life has been so thoroughly investigated by A. B. Ellis that it is best perhaps to quote his own words on this subject. He states that "the words 'fetish' and 'Fetishism' are absolutely unknown to all Negroes except such as have come into contact with Europeans, and have learned them from them . . . . . The word 'fetish' is of Portuguese origin, and it is a corruption of fetico, an amulet or charm. At the time of the Portuguese discoveries in West Africa, that is to say, from about 1441 to 1500, Catholic Europe abounded in relics of saints, charmed rosaries, images, and crosses, which were, in the majority of cases, regarded by their wearers as amulets or charms." The Portuguese, Mr. Ellis continued, applied the word only to the worship of inanimate objects. "The practice of propitiating by offering beings who are believed to dwell in the woods or mountains, the rivers or the sea, is not fetishism. Neither can the worship of idols be so termed, for the idol is merely the representation of an absent god, or the symbol of an idea, and has of itself no supernatural or superhuman power or quality."

Mr. Ellis sums up as follows his conclusions on this subject: "So far from fetishism being peculiarly characteristic of the religion of the Negro of the Gold Coast, I am of opinion that the Negro is remarkably free from it . . . . . Along with the belief that fetishism is the chief characteristic of the religion of the Negroes of the Gold Coast has grown up a belief that

they fancy they can coerce their gods, and force them to do what they wish. I have read also, in at least one book, that the natives beat their gods if their prayers are unanswered. To this I can only say that, after an experience of the Gold Coast extending over thirteen years, I have never heard of, much less witnessed, anything of the kind, although I have made inquiries in every direction. The idea of coercion as applied to a deity appears to be quite foreign to the mind of the Negro, who rather seeks to gain his ends by adulation and offerings . . . . Moreover, as the native of the Gold Coast firmly believes in the intangible individuality of his gods, it is difficult to see how he could suppose himself able to ill-treat them."

Industry, Art, Manners

It is nothing short of amazing how thoroughly the African races have adapted themselves to the climatic variations of the Continent, using the opportunities it afforded for cattle raising, hunting, agriculture and commerce. Moreover, at a very early era, so early as to incline leading anthropologists to attribute to Africans its invention, they were smelting iron. They are among the first races to raise cattle and use their milk. Professor Franz Boas in an address at Atlanta University gave the following summary of the cultural contribution of African native races:

"While much of the history of early invention is shrouded in darkness, it seems likely that at a time when the European was still satisfied with rude stone tools, the African had invented or adopted the art of smelting iron . . . . . It seems not unlikely that the people that made the marvelous discovery of reducing iron ores by smelting were the African Negroes. Neither ancient Europe, nor ancient western Asia, nor ancient China knew iron and everything points to its introduction from Africa. At the time of the great African discoveries towards the end of the past century, the trade of the blacksmith was found all over Africa, from north to south and from east to west. With his simple bellows and a charcoal fire he reduced the ore that is found in many parts of the continent and forged implements of great usefulness and beauty. Due to native in-

vention is also the extended early African agriculture, each village being surrounded by its garden patches and field in which millet is grown. Domesticated animals were also kept; in the agricultural regions chickens and pigs, while in the arid parts of the country where agriculture is not possible, large herds of cattle, were raised. It is also important to note that the cattle were milked, an art which in early times was confined to Africa, Europe and Northern Asia, while even now it has not been acquired by the Chinese. The occurrence of all these arts of life points to an early and energetic development of African culture."

Professor Boas points to the products of native workmen. the blacksmith, the weaver, wood-carver and the potter as furnishing "cultural achievements of no mean order."

But it is in the most rudimentary adjustments to climate and geographic peculiarities that the genius of the native races is shown. Dowd tells how the Bushmen, living in the waterless Kalahari desert and having often to go without water for several days, made even this environment yield them liquid. When they came to the dried bed of a river or pond, in pursuit of game, they would take a long reed and make a primitive filter by tying long grass around one end of this tube. They would then push the filter end as deep as possible into the muddy soil, allowing the water to slowly penetrate the filter. The water would then be drawn up by suction and discharged into an egg shell.

Again, in the case of the Hottentots, they had developed a complete system of counting and numbers, on a decimal basis, arising from the necessity of keeping track of their large herds of cattle. Native industries and crafts, still widely dispersed in Africa, were immeasurably more so before the advent of cheaply made and cheaply sold articles of European manufacture. For example, the Ashanti people knew how to make "cotton fabrics, turn and glaze earthenware, forge iron, fabricate instruments and arms, embroider rugs and carpets, and set gold and precious stones." Abyssinia in 1914 was estimated to have twenty million head of sheep and goats in addition to great herds of cattle. A Somali family would have an average of from 200 to 300 goats and sheep, 10 to 40 camels and 10 to 20 cows.

Among the Galla tribes, cultivation of the soil was undertaken with a hoe and a wooden plow drawn by oxen. Throughout the grain-raising parts of Africa, travelers and explorers have reported seeing granaries and storehouses in connection with the native villages. In the zone inhabited by the redoubtable warriors of the Niam-Niam, the handcrafts include copper and iron work, the making of hoes, weapons, knives, pottery, wood carvings, basket work, bark cloth, copper rings, etc. They, like many other Negro tribes furnish clever smithywork. Of these same Niam-Niam, the explorer Schweinfurth wrote that: "Nowhere in any part of Africa, have I ever come across a people that in every attitude and every motion exhibited so thorough a mastery of all the circumstances of war and of the chase as these Niam-Niam."

The fashioning of musical instruments is one of the industries to be found throughout the length and breadth of Africa. "Uganda is a land of music and musicians," says Dowd. "It possesses a great variety of native musical instruments such as the drum, horn, rattles, bells, flute, harp, etc., with many additions since the introduction of European civilization. 'Every little goatherd has a flute', says Tucker, 'and almost every other man who walks along the road is playing on a reed flageolet.' . . . . . The natives are very fond of singing and a professional class of singers is employed by the king to enliven his court."

Sir Harry Johnston speaks of the Baganda as being especially versed in the making and playing of flutes, which they manufacture from the thick canes of sorghum, elephant grass, sugar cane, bamboos and other wood. They have too the *kinanda,* an instrument consisting of slips of iron and resonant wood fastened to a sounding board and twanged by the fingers. This same tribe had developed a decimal system of calculation before the advent of Europeans or Arabs, and had words for every multiple of ten up to twenty millions. Sir Harry Johnston says of the Baganda that they are a people "so naturally polite and artistic that they may in time justify the title which the author of this book has several times applied to them—'The Japanese of Central Africa' ". Their country provides them with different colored clay and this they have utilized in the manu-

facture of fine pottery further beautified with a plumbago glaze. Cups, vases and milk pots made by the people are to be seen in the British Museum. They have also developed a variety of basket work, like the Bahima, who weave some of the baskets so fine that they can contain milk without leakage.

The politeness and ceremonial considerateness of the Baganda has received exceptional tribute from Johnston: "Their chiefs are certainly native gentlemen who possess a degree of tact which many Europeans might imitate. I do not think I have ever been bored by a Muganda. If they come on a visit, they rise to go at the right moment. When you are travelling through their country, and arrive at a camp near the residence of a big chief, he would never dream of paying you a visit until he had first ascertained that you had rested from your fatigue, and that his presence would be agreeable." The Bahima, too, use flutes, also lyres and drums. In the modern kingdom of Ankole were found three special drums hundreds of years old and possessing ceremonial significance.

The musical development of the Niam-Niam, according to Schweinfurth, led even to a primitive kind of opera or drama with one man as the whole caste. "There is a singular class of professional musicians who make their appearance decked out in the most fantastic way with feathers, and covered with a promiscuous array of bits of wood and roots, and all the pretentious emblems of magic art, the feet of earth-pigs, the shells of tortoises, the beaks of eagles, the claws of birds, and teeth in every variety. . . . Whenever one of this fraternity presents himself, he at once begins to recite all the details of his travels and experiences in an emphatic recitative, and never forgets to conclude by an appeal to the liberality of his audience." Another explorer reports the recitation by troubadours, to the accompaniment of a musical instrument of the deeds of their ancestors. And Dowd speaks of the sham fighting of the Niam-Niam during the war dance as an embryonic drama.

Chamberlain refers to the variety of musical instruments scattered throughout Negro Africa: "Negro Africa possesses many varieties of drums, and of stringed instruments akin to the harp and the violin, etc. Indeed all stages necessary for the development of the harp from the simplest form to the instrument as

we find it among the ancient Egyptians previous to its dispersal over Asia and Europe are to be met with on African soil, and the attribution of its invention to some Negro people is quite reasonable, on the evidence in hand. And the same thing, with somewhat less certainty, perhaps, may be said of the violin. In the characteristically African marimba, or xylophone, we have the beginnings of the piano and closely related musical instruments, in which case, one of its names, 'the Negro piano', assumes a new significance. The 'pot drum' so-called, and perhaps another variety or two of that instrument, originated also in Negro Africa. The *goura* of certain South African peoples is a curious musical instrument which still awaits adoption or modification by civilized man."

One phase of African handiwork which has of late years been acclaimed throughout the civilized world is reflected in the wood carvings, of ceremonial masks and figures, also the famous bronze castings found in Benin. The first exhibition of African carvings as works of art was held in 1914 in New York, at the famous laboratory known as "291". Here during a series of related exhibitions, showing the foundations of modern art expression and the relationship between the various forms of expression, African wood carvings were exhibited as part of a series featuring the work of the celebrated modern artists, Picasso, Braque and Picabia. That these primitive artists and many others had been profoundly influenced by the work of the primitive carvers was clearly shown. In connection with this first exhibition at 291 Fifth Avenue, of African sculpture, Marius De Zayas, himself a caricaturist of distinction, wrote a notice explicitly showing the indebtedness of modern artists to this source of inspiration. Mr. De Zayas found in this Negro art of wood carving the point of departure for what is now known as "abstract of representation". "Negro art", wrote Mr. De Zayas, "has reawakened in us a sensibility obliterated by an education, which makes us always connect what we see with what we know —our visualization with our knowledge, and makes us, in regard to form, use our intellect more than our senses." Besides the artists named, perhaps the outstanding sculptor of the present generation, the Rumanian, Constantin Brancusi, has been pro-

foundly and avowedly influenced by the plastic work of the African Negro carvers.

It is not merely in the plastic arts that the Negro Africans have distinguished themselves. Despite the belief formerly widespread that they lacked a literature, their languages are rich and expressive and almost all tribes have many proverbs and tales embodying folk wisdom and tribal and individual experience of life. A. B. Ellis, among others, has collected numbers of these proverbs and cites, for example, the following as showing the shrewd wit of the Yoruba people:

Boasting is not courage.

He who forgives ends the quarrel.

Do not attempt that you cannot bring to a good end.

He who marries a beauty marries trouble.

A poor man has no relations.

He who annoys another only teaches him to strengthen himself.

When the jackal dies the fowls do not mourn, for the jackal never brings up a chicken.

Birth does not differ from birth; as the free man was born so was the slave.

A fugitive does not stop to pick the thorns from his foot, neither does he make choice of his sauce.

These proverbs are part of a native literature not the less real and widespread because unwritten. It includes innumerable fables, among them the stories of the hare and the tortoise, and other animal tales which very likely were brought by slaves to America to form the basis for the Uncle Remus and other collections.

"The Yoruba folk-lore tales are very numerous," says Ellis. "A reciter of tales . . . is a personage highly esteemed, and in great demand for social gatherings. Some men, indeed, make a profession of story-telling, and wander from place to place reciting tales. . . . As among the Ewe tribes, the professional story-teller very often uses a drum, with the rhythm of which the pauses in the narrative are filled up. . . . The professional story-teller must not be confounded with the . . . narrator of the national traditions, several of whom are

attached to each king or paramount chief, and who may be regarded as the depositories of the ancient chronicles."

There remains by way of conclusion to say a word as to the morality of African tribal life. That customs vary widely is a fact familiar even to travellers among civilized nations. The variation among the races of Africa is of course wide and includes such extremes as cannibalism and infanticide, as well as excessive cruelty in warfare. However, testimony is abundant to the prevalence of well-established codes as well, which are scrupulously lived up to and enforced. The segregation of young girls among the Vai in the institution known as the Gree-gree bush, and the careful avoidance by all males of any violation of its sanctity is only one instance in point. "The Negro tribe that has no moral conceptions is yet to be discovered and described," wrote George W. Ellis. "Of the dozen or more in Liberia none are so low but what they have 'Gree-gree bushes' or institutions for the special instruction and protection of their girls; laws regulating marriage and defining crime, and numerous customs the purpose of which is to secure respect for the aged, obedience to parents, reverence for the fetish gods, and to save the captured in war from the pangs of death."

The conclusion to be drawn even from a superficial study of conditions in the great continent of Africa is that men there as in other parts of the globe are human, exhibiting every variety of human disposition and aptitude. And the more the native races are studied the more complex, fascinating and profound are seen to be their cultural inheritance and gifts to the rest of the world.

It is long since Africa was known as the land of mystery. It is now being opened up by railroads, highways, and will doubtless more and more afford nourishment, raw materials, and produce of every variety to the rest of the world. In the circumstances it behooves intelligent people to inform themselves about the achievements of the peoples native to this vast and rich continent, peoples whose achievement, incidentally, cast an illuminating light upon the rapid progress and development under strange conditions, in an alien environment, of the Negro in America.

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